

## STAFF REPORT

TO: Finance Committee Date: September 13, 2011

From: Lauren Bradley, Finance and Management Services Director

Via: Gary Jackson, City Manager

SUBJECT: Request for Proposals for community media development services – staff recommendations

Background: In May 2011, public access studio space provided by a third-party organization closed as a result of funding challenges. Due to the status of the organization, the City decided not to renew or extend its recently expired contract for public access management services. As an alternative, the City of Asheville and Buncombe County issued a joint Request for Proposals (RFP) for community media development services, projects or initiatives with an emphasis on: community development, economic and workforce development, industry development, and training and education.

The RFP was posted on July 1, and submissions were due by August 1. An evaluation panel of nine employees from the City of Asheville, Buncombe County and the Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce reviewed and scored the submissions during the month of August.

Submissions were scored on a 100-point scale using weighted criteria, which included:

- Potential of the project to achieve results consistent with goals outlined in the RFP (weighted 25% of evaluation).
- Appropriateness of the proposed performance measurements and their ability to provide evidence that the outcome was achieved (10%).
- Quality of the proposed partnership, if applicable (5%).
- Extent to which the project engages the public (25%).
- Appropriateness to the organization's and/or individual's mission (5%).
- As appropriate, plans for documentation, evaluation, and dissemination of the project results (5%).
- Ability to carry out the project based on such factors as (25%):
  - Appropriateness of the budget, funding support and sustainability strategy.
  - Quality and clarity of the project goals and design.
  - Resources involved.
  - Qualifications of the project's personnel.
  - Readiness to meet the County's and City's Agreement requirements.
  - Likelihood that the project or initiative will be completed within the proposed period of support or able to sustain itself without future funding from the County and the City.

Results: Nine submissions were received by the August 1 deadline. Evaluators reviewed and scored proposals independently, and then scores were aggregated together to provide an average score for each submission. The evaluation panel had one meeting to discuss the results and make recommendations for next steps.

Overall, it was the consensus of the evaluation panel that none of the submissions fully captured all of the elements included in the RFP and that the quality of the submissions, when taken as a whole, fell below expectations. The panel cited the low scoring range as a matter of concern. Aggregated average scores ranged from 38 points to 79 points. A detailed scoring tabulation is attached to this report.

The three highest scoring submissions proposed similar projects for consideration. These submissions proposed, in some similar fashion, to create an online portal for local news and information as submitted by local citizens, writers, bloggers, videographers, photographers and the like.

Based on the panel's discussion, the group is recommending two options for Committee consideration:

**Option 1:** Conclude the process without making an award.

Pros:

- Allows the City and the County to possibly pursue other opportunities that are more aligned with policy objectives in the future.

Cons:

- Although the RFP does not guarantee it, there is likely a community expectation that an award will be made.

**Option 2:** Invite the organizations that submitted the two highest scoring proposals to make presentations to the evaluation panel and/or the Finance Committee for scoring consideration. The RFP reserved the right to require presentations as part of the assessment process. This would provide an additional opportunity for these groups to further explain how their submissions would achieve the goals described in the RFP.

Pros:

- Provides an opportunity to learn more about the top scoring proposals to determine if they meet the objectives outlined in the RFP.

Cons:

- May heighten the expectation that award will be made.
- Other organizations and individuals that submitted proposals may view the opportunity to interview as an unfair advantage in the process.
- Lengthens the overall timeline of the process.

The evaluation panel is seeking the Committee's feedback on the two proposed options.

Attachments: Scoring Tabulation with submission descriptions